# Mediterranean hydrocarbons pollution from Landsat

Lucien Wald, Jean-Marie Monget, Michel Albuisson

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# MEDITERRANEAN HYDROCARBONS POLLUTION FROM LANDSAT

WALD L., MONGET J.M., ALBUISSON M.

Centre de Télédétection et d'Analyse des Milieux Naturels
Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines de Paris
SOPHIA-ANTIPOLIS, 06560 VALBONNE (France)

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies have shown that oil spills have been viewed by LANDSAT. The detection of oil is mainly due to the variations of reflectance between the sea and the oil spill.

This result is used in the framework of the European Project "ARCHIMEDES", lead by the Joint Research Center (Ispra, Italy), which purpose is the study of the pollution in the Mediterranean Sea.

800 LANDSAT images obtained from 1972 to 1975 were examined. The cumulative area covered by the hydrocarbons spread each year in the Mediterranean Sea is crudely estimated to be 175,000 $km^2$.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 1980, the Council of Ministers of the European Communities had approved the ARCHIMEDES Project. The long term objectives of this programme are :

- Research on the detection and identification of type of hydrocarbons.
- Research on the propagation of chemical substances along coastlines.
- Coordination between Joint Research Center and the relevant European research laboratories to develop the means and experience required to define meaningful pilot studies.
- Collaboration with other agencies on intercalibration and sampling programmes.

As a leader of this project, Joint Research Center Ispra entrusted our laboratory with a preliminary inventory and mapping of the hydrocarbons pollution of the Mediterranean Sea from the LANDSAT imagery.
It must be emphasized that our LANDSAT observations have not been correlated with sea-truth. Thus, we cannot affirm that the observed spills are oil spills. The ARCHIMEDES Project is expected to resolve this uncertainty.

## 2. VIEWING OF OIL SPILLS BY LANDSAT

Several authors have reported on the viewing of oil spills by LANDSAT.

The difference between the reflection coefficients of a rough sea and of a calm one allows for the detection of an oil spill. While an oil spill is flattening the sea and reflects only in one direction, the capillary waves of a rough sea scatter the light and a fraction of the incident light reaches the satellite.

From the Cox and Munk's model, we have computed the reflection coefficients and the glitter reflectances for a calm sea (wind of 5 m/s) and for a rough sea (wind of 14 m/s). As the wind becomes stronger than 7 m/s, foam appears and increases the reflection coefficient. We have introduced the presence of white caps in the reflection model by assuming a foam albedo of 50 % and a foam coverage of 7 % for wind of 14 m/s. The model is sensitive to the observationnal geometry, i.e. to the sun and satellite zenith and azimuth angles. In figure 1 are represented the glitter reflectances computed throughout the year for mean sun time 10h30 and for latitude 45°N. This corresponds to the LANDSAT overpasses.

As the MSS 7 channel of LANDSAT can measure a difference of reflectance of about 1 %, one can see that MSS 7 can easily detect the variations of the sea state, except during winter where rougher sea states are required to be observable. However, this period is very cloudy, and no routinely satellite survey is possible.

We can consider an oil spill as a calm sea, because their optical properties in the MSS 7 channel are equivalent. Thus, WE CAN SURVEY THE HYDROCARBON POLLUTION AT SEA, using the LANDSAT MSS 7 CHANNEL. But we expect to underestimate the pollution level in winter, because of the low elevation sun angles, and to have a good estimation during the rest of the year.

## 3. MEDITERRANEAN SEA INVENTORY RESULTS

We have applied this model to the Mediterranean Sea. Owing to the kindness of Pr. APEL and of his staff, we have examined about 800 LANDSAT images, obtained during the last six months of 1972 and the years 1973 and 1975.

Each image was interpreted for the presence or the absence of oil spill.

Oil spill cannot be confused with areas of wind shadow, because the limits of these areas are very diffuse and these areas are often connected to the coastlines. We take care also not to count twice a spill. The mean area covered by the spills displayed on one scene is about 100 $km^2$.

For the whole data set, the percentage of images showing hydrocarbons films is more than 50 %. This percentage varies along the year. It reaches its maximum during June and falls strongly in November, according to the reflection model.

It would then be attractive to estimate the cumulative area covered by the oil spread each year in the Mediterranean Sea. If we neglect evaporation, biodegradation and oil sink, and assume that the detected spills are very recent, we obtain a crude estimation of the cumulative area of order of 175,000 $km^2$.

Because of the hypothesis, this number must be only consider as an illustrative estimation.

## 4. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The opinions or assertions expressed herein are those of the authors, and are not officially endorsed by the E.E.C. Administration.

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